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VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 1700TH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 14 May 1993, at 10.30 a.m.

President: Mr. RICHARDSON (United Kingdom)

- Adoption of the agenda
- Dissemination of information on the United Nations and the International Trusteeship system in Trust Territories: report of the Secretary-General
- Examination of the annual report of the Administering Authority for the year ended 30 September 1992: Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands
- General debate
- Appointment of the Drafting Committee
- Organization of work

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: Before proceeding to our business, I should first like thank all members of the Council for the very businesslike way in which we moved through our agenda yesterday. I should also like to welcome Mr. Uherbelau to our gathering. I understand he flew here directly from Tokyo, for which he has my sympathy, and I thank him very much for being here.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (T/1970/Add.1 and T/1974) (continued)

The PRESIDENT: I should like to draw members' attention to document T/1970/Add.1, which contains an invitation addressed to the Trusteeship Council from the Administering Authority to observe the forthcoming referendum in Palau, and document T/1974, which contains a letter from the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations.

If there are no comments or objections, I shall take it that the Council wishes to add to its agenda, as agenda item 13, the question of sending a mission to observe the forthcoming plebiscite in Palau.

It was so decided.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ON THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE INTERNATIONAL TRUSTEESHIP SYSTEM IN TRUST TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL RESOLUTION 36 (III) AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 754 (VIII)) (continued)

The PRESIDENT: Members will recall that yesterday, at our 1699th meeting, several members inquired about the impact of information materials that the Department of Public Information (DPI) sends regularly to the Territory of the Pacific Islands, and it was suggested that the secretariat of the Council could be entrusted with the task of ascertaining that the information provided by DPI does reach its addressees in the

(The President)

Territory. I understand that the secretariat of the Trusteeship Council and the Department of Public Information have consulted on the question and that the team servicing the next visiting mission to the Territory will also perform these functions while in the Territory. If I may say so, I think that is a very sensible and satisfactory outcome.

I want to thank Mr. Tlili of DPI so very much for coming along and for giving us the information at our meeting yesterday.

If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Council decides to take note of the report of the Secretary-General contained in document T/1972 and conclude consideration of this agenda item.

It was so decided.

EXAMINATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ADMINISTERING AUTHORITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 1992: TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS (T/1974) (continued)

The PRESIDENT: I wish to draw members' attention again to document T/1974, containing an invitation from the Government of the United States to the Trusteeship Council to send a mission to observe the plebiscite, which is likely to occur on 27 July 1993.

Mr. STAYMAN (United States of America): I should just like to follow up a bit on one of the issues that was raised yesterday. I am pleased to report that after yesterday's meeting, the Palauan delegation and representatives of the Department of the Interior met with officials of the United Nations Development Programme to finalize arrangements for hiring the master planner. It was agreed yesterday that the contract-signing on the Master Plan will occur in Palau in early June, concurrent with the initial organizational meeting. We are very pleased at this commitment to expeditious progress on the Master Plan.

The PRESIDENT: If there are no further questions at this stage for the Administering Authority, we shall now begin the general debate on this item.

GENERAL DEBATE

Mr. EVANS (United Kingdom): The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has consistently supported the efforts of the people of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands to achieve whatever form of political status meets their wishes and their particular circumstances, and we believe that the Trusteeship Council should give its full support to such efforts.

As the representative of the Administering Authority, Ambassador Walker, noted in his introductory remarks, neither the Security Council nor the United States intended the trusteeship to be an indefinite status, and it is clearly an anachronism in the final decade of the twentieth century. We have therefore heard with interest of the initiatives taken by the Government of Palau since the last meeting of this Council which are aimed at resolving the question of political status.

Vice-President Remengesau has now informed this Council that the plebiscite has been scheduled for 27 July, and the Administering Authority has invited the Council to send a mission to observe it. It is the view of my delegation that the Trusteeship Council should accede to this request. However, I share the concern expressed by my colleague from the delegation of the Russian Federation about the timing of hearings on the lawsuit still outstanding on the referendum. It would be difficult for the Council to dispatch a mission to Palau at the end of July if this issue remained

(Mr. Evans, United Kingdom)

unresolved. In this context, we welcome the assurances of Vice-President Remengesau that it should be possible to resolve it before the scheduled date of the plebiscite.

It has been suggested in some quarters that the Compact of Free Association does not have the support of the people of Palau and that the actions of both the Administering Authority and the Palau Government in seeking now to resolve the question of political status in some way run counter to the principles of democracy. My delegation does not share this view. The Compact of Free Association has been clearly favoured by the majority of Palauans in every plebiscite held to date. Support for it has varied but has never fallen below the respectable figure of 60 per cent. I should also like to point out that the Visiting Mission of this Council to Palau last year concluded that most Palauans were eager to see the question of political status resolved as soon as possible.

Turning now to conditions in Palau, my delegation recalls that at the fifty-ninth session of this Council a great deal of time was devoted to discussion of the impact of Secretary's Order 3142. My delegation said then that we believed the Order was necessary for the Administering Authority to fulfil its obligations to the Territory. At the same time, we shared the hope of the Visiting Mission that the need for the Order, or, at any rate, for its suspension provisions, would be diminished over time.

(Mr. Evans, United Kingdom)

We are therefore pleased to note the statement by Acting Assistant Secretary Stayman to this Council that since the Order came into force budget execution and fiscal management by both national and state Governments in Palau have improved significantly and that by the middle of this year the national Government antitipates the elimination of all previous years' debts. The fact that local revenues have increased from $12.5 million to just over $15 million is also significant. We are pleased too to note that the Administering Authority has reported that it was not necessary to invoke the suspension authority during the 1992 fiscal year.

We are also pleased to hear that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has now awarded the contract for the Palau Master Plan, which will be financed jointly by UNDP and the United States Department of the Interior. We have been concerned at the slow rate of progress on the Master Plan, on which so much depends. We hope that the work leading to the implementation of the Master Plan can be expedited, and in this context I welcome what Acting Assistant Secretary Stayman has just told the Council.

Finally, in respect of Secretarial Order 3142, we have noted with satisfaction the successful prosecution of those responsible for the assassination of the first President of Palau.

The annual report of the Administering Authority is a comprehensive document. We do not have the time here to examine all the areas it covers, but I should like to make a few points on some of those of major interest.

Tourism remains the most important source of income for Palau, and the number of tourists continues to increase; it is up 6 per cent this year over

(Mr. Evans, United Kingdom)

last. The total numbers involved remain small at present, but the Visiting Mission noted that Palau's natural beauty gives it the potential to become a major tourist destination, and the Administering Authority has estimated that the number of tourists may increase by 40 per cent over the next two years. The Government of Palau is clearly alive to the risk of environmental degradation caused by increased tourism and has taken some welcome initiatives through the Palau Visitors Authority in this regard. Further scope for action should derive from the Master Plan, which will include provisions for environmental-impact assessments of economic activity in Palau.

The development of the fishing industry, now Palau's second-largest source of income, has been the subject of much discussion over the years in this Council. The report of the Administering Authority contains much useful detail about the fishing industry, the development of which the Visiting Mission recommended should have high priority. In yesterday's discussion of the report I raised the questions of the sustainability of fish stocks and the enforcement of fishing regulations. I shall not therefore go into those questions in any detail here, but would only note that the Administering Authority and the Palau Government are also concerned about stock sustainability, and that action is under way to rehabilitate the former United States Coast Guard cutter that will be used for fisheries-patrol duties.

Work on infrastructure projects has proceeded satisfactorily. For example, according to the report of the Administering Authority there has been substantial progress on the improvement and extension of dirt roads in Babeldoab and further reductions in the numbers of people subject to "water hours" service by the Palau Water Branch.

(Mr. Evans, United Kingdom)

In the field of health care, the opening of the new Palau hospital, which was funded by the United States Congress, is a crucial development, and one which will make a major contribution to the improvement of the provision of health care to the people of Palau. We note with concern, however, that both the Visiting Mission and the Administering Authority have identified a shortage of qualified health-care personnel, in particular doctors, for which the need is critical.

There are two other issues of detail which I should like to address briefly. The first is land. Progress on the land issue remains slow, but we welcome the grant of $185,000 from the Administering Authority to Palau to expedite the programme of registering all land titles.

The second issue is public-service employment. The report of the Administering Authority notes that the number of civil-service employees has fallen by 47. However, 1,542 - nearly 10 per cent of the total population - remain in civil-service employment. In our view, Palau has not yet got right the balance between private- and public-sector employment.

In conclusion, I should like to underline our commitment to assisting the people of palau to achieve the political status of their choosing as soon as possible. There would appear to be a good chance of success within the next few months. We must not, however, count our chickens before they are hatched. Several representatives present in this Chamber have in recent years made statements which they had hoped would be their last in this Council. I myself made such a statement last year. I am cautiously optimistic, however, that I shall not be required to do so again next year.

Mr. FOUCHER (France) (interpretation from French): My delegation has not yet spoken at this session, Sir, and I should like to begin by congratulating you on your election to the presidency. I feel confident that, under your wise leadership, the Council will promptly complete its work for this session, which, as your predecessor noted, may be the last.

I wish to welcome the delegation of Palau, whose yearly participation makes a very useful contribution to the success of our work.

The Trusteeship Council has begun its sixtieth session in a new context. In recent years three of the four entities within the purview of the Council have chosen a new status in conformity with the will of the peoples. Today, the trusteeship system applies only to Palau. All previous speakers have spoken of the importance of that Territory too putting an end to a situation no longer justified by the economic and political situation and that does not accord with the wishes of the inhabitants.

Last year, indeed, a Visiting Mission to Palau concluded that its present status was no longer commensurate with the political, economic and social maturity the Territory has achieved. Last session, my delegation fully endorsed that finding.

The 1992 report of the Administering Authority only serves to confirm that conclusion. Last year, the Territory again made significant progress. Investments grew significantly. Tourism and, in particular, fisheries continued to develop. There were also significant improvements in education and health care, as reflected by the completion of the hospital at Koror. This all shows how obsolete trusteeship for Palau has become.

It is thus essential that Palau speedily adopt a new status that conforms with the aspirations of its population, so it can continue its economic and social development on a stable institutional basis.

(Mr. Foucher, France)

In that connection, we note that on 4 November 1992 a long-awaited vote was taken; this should make it possible to overcome the institutional obstacles that had blocked change in Palau. We note too that a referendum is to be held in July. My delegation hopes that this will make it possible to achieve a final solution for the Territory.

It is not for the Council, of course, to dictate the future institutions of Palau; that lies within the sole competence of the population of Palau. But I should like none the less to recommend that, should the Compact of Free Association not be adopted, all alternative options should be examined.

As we await the end of the trusteeship for Palau, it is important, of course, that the Administering Authority continue to carry out its obligations. Once again this year my delegation notes with satisfaction the assurances of the United States delegation on this matter.

I wish to conclude by thanking the Secretariat staff whose commitment, effectiveness and ability contributed once again this year to the success of our work.

Mr. DZAKHAEV (Russian Federation) (interpretation from Russian): By the terms of the United Nations Charter, the basic tasks of the trusteeship system are to further international peace and security and to promote the politial, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the Trust Territories, and their progressive development towards self-government or independence as may be appopriate to the particular circumstances of each Territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned.

(Mr. Dzakhaev, Russian Federation)

During this session the members of the Trusteeship Council have had the opportunity, although in a very tight time-frame, to consider in detail the report of the Administering Authority, the United States of America, on the situation in the last Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Palau, and also carefully to listen to the statements of the representatives of the United States, of Palau and of the petitioners.

During Council meetings specific questions have been asked in order to obtain as complete and specific information as possible with respect to the political, economic and social situation in Palau, and also on the measures taken by the Administering Authority to carry out its responsibility in accordance with the Trusteeship Agreement.

We feel that all this has promoted the development of a constructive dialogue and an objective and efficient consideration of the items on this session's agenda, and has also helped to form a sufficiently complete picture of the implementation of the tasks under the Trusteeship Agreement.

The materials presented and the discussion which has taken place have shown specific achievements in a number of areas relating to the economic, social and political development of the Territory over the last period and the assistance given this process by the Administering Authority.

We are pleased to note the statement made at the Council's meeting of 13 May by the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Internal Affairs of the United States, Mr. Allen Stayman, on the efforts made by the Administering Authority to begin working out as quickly as possible a general development plan for the Territory. In this connection, our delegation is pleased to note Mr. Stayman's statement today on the situation with regard to the speedy conclusion of a contract on the beginning of the practical

(Mr. Dzakhaev, Russian Federation)

implementation of the Master Plan, and also on the allocation by the United States of approximately $45 million to finance economic and social development projects for Palau.

At the same time, a great deal still remains to be done to overcome financial dependence, to develop industry, to create the appropriate infrastructure and capital construction, to increase electrification in the Territory, to establish a social protection system, to protect the originality of the local culture, and so on.

Particular concern at this session was expressed with respect to the problem of illegal fishing by foreign vessels in Palau waters, as well as with respect to the land question and other problems. There is hardly any need to dwell now on these questions in detail, all the more so since delegations have already spoken on them in quite some detail. These questions were raised both during yesterday's Trusteeship Council meeting and in the report of the United Nations Visiting Mission to Palau of March-April 1992. It is quite clear that the obligations of the Administering Authority under the Trusteeship Agreement and the United Nations Charter remain in force until the implementation by the population of Palau of its right to self-determination on the basis of the free manifestation of its will and the relevant Security Council decision.

One of the main problems facing Palau and its people is the question of the future political status of the Territory. In this regard we note the intention of the Palau authorities to cooperate with the Administering Authority and accordingly to hold a referendum on the question of the Compact of Free Association at the end of July, at which the political status of Palau will be determined.

(Mr. Dzakhaev, Russian Federation)

The United Nations can doubtless be of assistance here, in addition to the Administering Authority, in ensuring that the goals of trusteeship be fully carried out with respect to the last Trust Territory so that the people of Palau can exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and free choice, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, the Trusteeship Agreement and the Declaration on decolonization.

In this regard, we note the assurances contained in the letter of the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Christopher, with respect to the implementation of some provisions of the Compact. We also hope that the United Nations Mission's participation in observing the holding of the referendum will contribute significantly to the implementation by the people of this Territory of its right to self-determination.

The assurances made by representatives of the United States to members of the Security Council and in the Trusteeship Council with respect to all of Micronesia, including Palau, to the effect that the United States has no plan to establish military bases on this Territory are important. Consistent implementation of the various aspects of these assurances would promote the general trend towards a lessening of foreign military presence and the development of all-round, comprehensive cooperation in the region.

We wish to express the hope that this session of the Trusteeship Council will mark a turning-point in determining the future political status of the Territory on the basis of the free expression of the will of its people.

Mr. ZHANG Yan (China) (interpretation from Chinese): I am very glad to have the opportunity to speak during the general debate of the sixtieth session of the Trusteeship Council. In the past few days the Council has reviewed the 1992 annual report on Palau - the Trust Territory of the Pacific

(Mr. Zhang Yan, China)

Islands - prepared by the Administering Authority, and listened to the statements of the members of the Council, the representatives of the Administering Authority and Palau, and the petitioners, which have all provided us with first-hand information better to understand the situation in the Trust Territory.

I shall must make a few brief comments on the political status of Palau. Based on both the written and oral presentations of the parties concerned, we can see that over the past year, thanks to the efforts of the people of Palau, progress in varying degrees has been made in the Trust Territory in the political, economic, educational and social fields. At the same time, we have noted that the Trust Territory and the Administering Authority have conducted useful discussions on issues related to the political status and economic and cultural development of Palau. However, there still exist some issues that need to be dealt with urgently. According to the provisions of the United Nations Charter and the Trusteeship Agreement, much work remains to be done by the Administering Authority. We hope that the parties concerned with act in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the Trusteeship Agreement and adopt a practical and reasonable attitude to settle these questions properly through consultations, so as to promote the political, economic and social development of the Trust Territory.

(Mr. Zhang Yan, China)

Promoting world peace and security, enhancing the progress of the inhabitants of Trust Territories in the political, economic, social and educational fields, and helping Trust Territories gradually develop towards autonomy and independence are the main tasks established by the United Nations Charter for the international trusteeship system. Thanks to the protracted and tireless efforts of the international community and the peoples of Trust Territories, a large number of Trust Territories have terminated their trusteeship status and become independent and equal members of the international community. At present, Palau is the only Trust Territory still under the United Nations trusteeship system, and the question of its political future remains to be resolved.

The Chinese Government has all along supported the demands and aspirations of the peoples of Trust Territories to achieve national self-determination and independence. We therefore hold that it is the right of the people of Palau to choose its own political status in line with its national interests and to decide the political future of Palau. In this connection, we believe that the referendum planned for July this year will be a major event in the political life of the people of Palau. We also believe that the Administering Authority should take practical and effective steps to fulfil its commitment to the Trust Territory and to meet the reasonable demands and legitimate aspirations of the people of the Trust Territory so as to create the conditions necessary for the people of Palau to exercise its full rights. We hope that, through the joint endeavours of the international community, the people of Pa au and the parties concerned, Palau will become, as other Trust Territories have done, an independent member of the international community at an early date.

The PRESIDENT: The Council has thus concluded the general debate.

APPOINTMENT OF THE DRAFTING COMMITTEE

The PRESIDENT: As agreed at our prior informal consultations, I should like to suggest that the Council appoint a Drafting Committee whose terms of reference will be to prepare draft recommendations to be included in the forthcoming report of the Trusteeship Council to the Security Council. I should like to propose that the Committee be composed of the representatives of China, France, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom.

If I hear no comment or objection, it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: I wish to inform memebers that at our meeting on Monday, 17 May - which I hope will be our final one - the Council will, as decided in informal consultations, hear closing statements from the representatives of the Administering Authority and of the Trust Territory. The Council will also take a decision on its conclusions and recommendations to the Security Council, which will be contained in the report of the Drafting Committee that has just been established. The Council will also take decisions on the outstanding agenda items 2, 10, 11 and 13.

In connection with agenda item 13, which is the question of sending a mission to observe the forthcoming referendum in Palau, it is my understanding that the Drafting Committee will be preparing a draft resolution for our consideration on Monday.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.